

*Historic Conservation Office
Department of Community Development & Planning
Local Historic Designation Fact Sheet*



WHAT IS LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION?

- ❑ Cincinnati City Council passed Historic Conservation Legislation in 1980. The purpose of this legislation was and is to promote the conservation, protection, restoration, rehabilitation, use and overall enhancement of structures and districts in the City that possess special historic or architectural value.
- ❑ The legislation also created a nine member Historic Conservation Board, composed of an historic preservationist, an historian, an urban designer or planner, an attorney, a developer or realtor, architects, and community representatives, all of which are appointed by the City Manager. One of the Board's principal roles is to review and approve proposed changes to designated properties based on conservation guidelines adopted for a specific landmark or district.

HOW DOES THE DESIGNATION PROCESS WORK?

- ❑ **Step 1:** A designation study begins with a request from individual property owners, a community council, a member of City Council, or a member of the Historic Conservation Board to evaluate a particular area or property.
- ❑ **Step 2:** The Department of Community Development and Planning's Historic Conservation Office staff studies the property or area for its architectural and historical significance. The study includes research, field survey, and meetings with property owners. The results of this work are compiled into a designation report, which includes conservation guidelines designed to protect and to maintain the character of an individual property or area.
- ❑ **Steps 3-5:** Three public hearings are held on the proposal for the designation of a local landmark or district. The first hearing takes place before the Historic Conservation Board, which makes a recommendation to the City Planning Commission on the designation. The City Planning Commission holds the second public hearing and forwards its recommendation to City Council. City Council holds the third and final public hearing and acts either to designate or not to designate the property or district, including its boundaries and conservation guidelines.

HOW DOES LOCAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION AFFECT A PROPERTY OWNER?

- ❑ Designation of a property as an individual landmark or as part of a district does not require owners to make improvements. No owner, however, shall fail to provide reasonable care and maintenance.
- ❑ A property owner who wants to make changes affecting the exterior of his or her property must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the Historic Conservation Board. The Board reviews a property owner's proposal for its compliance with the established conservation guidelines. The Board may approve, approve with conditions, or deny a request for a COA. Decisions may be appealed to the Zoning Board of Appeals.
- ❑ The Historic Conservation Board is empowered to grant relief from the Zoning Code when such relief is necessary and appropriate, in the interest of historic conservation and will not be materially detrimental to the property or neighborhood.

CAN A LOCAL LANDMARK OR A BUILDING IN A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT BE DEMOLISHED?

- ❑ One purpose of local designation is the preservation of the built environment. The Historic Conservation Board may approve demolition of a designated structure if the property owner can demonstrate to its satisfaction that a reasonable economic return cannot be gained from reusing the property or that denying a demolition permit would amount to a taking without just compensation.
- ❑ If the owner is a non-profit organization, the Historic Conservation Board can approve demolition if the owner can demonstrate to the Board's satisfaction that the denial of the application would deny the owner the use of the property in a manner compatible with its organizational purposes and would amount to a taking of the property without just compensation.
- ❑ No property owner shall cause, *through willful action or through neglect*, an alteration to or demolition of a designated historic property without the review and approval of the Historic Conservation Board.